

REMARKS

In response to the Official Action currently outstanding with regard to the above-identified application, which Official Action the Examiner has designated as being FINAL, Applicants respectfully request that the above-identified application be amended as indicated above so as to place the same in condition for allowance, or at least in better form for Appeal, pursuant to 37 CFR 1.116..

Claims 6-15 were outstanding at the time of the issuance of the currently outstanding FINAL Official Action. At that time, Claims 1-5 had been previously canceled, without prejudice, by Preliminary Amendment and Claims 16-17 had been canceled by Applicants' previous Amendment. By the foregoing Amendment, Applicants respectfully request that Claims 6 and 9-11 be amended as set forth above so as to be placed into condition of allowance, or at least better form for Appeal, pursuant to 37 CFR 1.116. Also, Applicants respectfully request that Claims 7-8 and 12-15 be canceled, without prejudice. Applicants do not request any withdrawal or addition of claims by this Amendment. Accordingly, in the event that the Examiner grants the entry of the foregoing Amendment, Claims 6 and 9-11 as hereinabove amended will constitute the claims under active prosecution in that above-identified application.

The claims of this application are reproduced hereinabove including indications of the changes being made and also including appropriate status identifiers as required by the Rules.

More specifically, in the currently outstanding Official Action that Examiner has:

1. Not re-acknowledged Applicants' claim for foreign priority under 35 USC §119 (a)-(d) or (f), and not reconfirmed the receipt by the United States Patent and Trademark Office of the required copies of the priority documents. – **Applicants respectfully note that the Examiner accepted their claim for foreign priority and acknowledged the receipt of the required copies of the priority documents earlier in this prosecution.**

2. Not reconfirmed the acceptance of the formal drawings filed with this application on 27 February 2006. – **Applicant respectfully noted that the Examiner accepted the formal drawings earlier in the prosecution of this application.**
3. Not reconfirmed the receipt of Applicants' Information Disclosure Statement of 27 February 2006 by providing Applicants with a copy of the Form PTO SB/08a/b that accompanied that Statement duly electronically confirmed by the Examiner as to his consideration of the art listed therein. – **Applicants respectfully note that this matter was attended to earlier in the prosecution of this application as well.**
4. Withdrawn the currently outstanding rejection of Claims 6-17 under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to point out and distinctly claim the subject matter that Applicants regard as their invention in view of Applicants' next previous Amendment in this prosecution.
5. Rejected Claim 6 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mutsuaki (JP 2000-244753) in view of Yoshiki (JP 11-275326) further in view of Chrisop et al (US Published Patent Application No. 2001/0025343).
6. Rejected Claims 7, 10, 13 and 16 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mutsuaki in view of Yoshiki in view of Chrisop et al further in view of Osamu et al (JP 05-022614).
7. Rejected Claims 8, 9, 11, 12, 14 and 15 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being upatentable over Mutsuaki in view of Osamu in view of Yoshiki in view of Chrisop et al..

Further comment concerning items 1-4 above is not deemed to be required in these Remarks.

With respect to the currently outstanding substantive rejections of the claims of this application (items 5-7 above), Applicants respectfully call the Examiner's attention to the fact that Claims 7-8 and 12-15 now have been canceled, without prejudice. As to the remaining Claims, the independent Claim 6 of this application from which all of the other pending claims depend directly or indirectly now has been amended so as to recite the following limitations:

means for detecting whether or not a processing unit for processing the
image data is provided and an operation state thereof,
means for deciding that the concealing method is to set authenticating
information to the image data in the case where it is detected
that the processing unit is provided and active, and for deciding
that the concealing method is to encrypt the image data and to
set authentication information in the case where it is detected
that the processing unit is not provided and active,

Applicants respectfully submit that none of the currently cited and applied references taken either alone or in combination with the others teaches, discloses or suggests the invention of Claim 6 as now claimed.

In particular, the cited Osamu et al reference is respectfully submitted to merely describe that a read image data is compressed when a secrecy device is in a non-operating state, and a read image data is encrypted when the secrecy device is in an operating state.

Since the invention of Claim 6 as now amended (from which all of the other pending claims depends either directly or indirectly) includes the above-quoted structure, the effect is obtained which is "convenience of the output process can be improved, because the designated image data is stored in concealment and the output process can be performed while maintaining security".

Also, the following effect is provided by the present invention as currently claimed, namely, "when the processing unit is a unit for encrypting the image data in storing the image data, the concealing method can be decided to set the authentication information which is different from the encryption. Thus, the effective use of the processing unit, if it is provided and active, can improve secrecy, and load of the operation of concealing can be relieved because the operation can be shared with the processing unit" are not disclosed, taught or suggested by the art upon which the Examiner currently relies in his rejection of this application.

For each and all of the foregoing reasons, therefore, Applicants respectfully submits that in the event that the Examiner grants the entry of the foregoing Amendment, all of the claims then pending in this application will be in condition for allowance, or at least in better form for Appeal, pursuant to 37 CFR 1.116. Accordingly, entry of the foregoing Amendment, reconsideration and allowance of the above-identified application in view of this submission is respectfully requested.

Finally, Applicant believes that additional fees beyond those submitted herewith are not required in connection with the consideration of this supplemental response to the currently outstanding Official Action. However, if for any reason a fee is required, a fee paid is inadequate or credit is owed for any excess fee paid, you are hereby authorized and requested to charge and/or credit Deposit Account No. 04-1105, as necessary, for the correct payment of all fees which may be due in connection with the filing and consideration of this communication.

Respectfully submitted,

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SIGNATURE OF PRACTITIONER

Reg. No. 27,840

David A. Tucker
(type or print name of practitioner)
Attorney for Applicant(s)

Tel. No.: (617) 517-5508

Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge LLP
P.O. Box 55874
P.O. Address

Customer No.: 21874

Boston, MA 02205